

# Trends & Tudes

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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## Grandparents, Tweens and Teens: Generations United

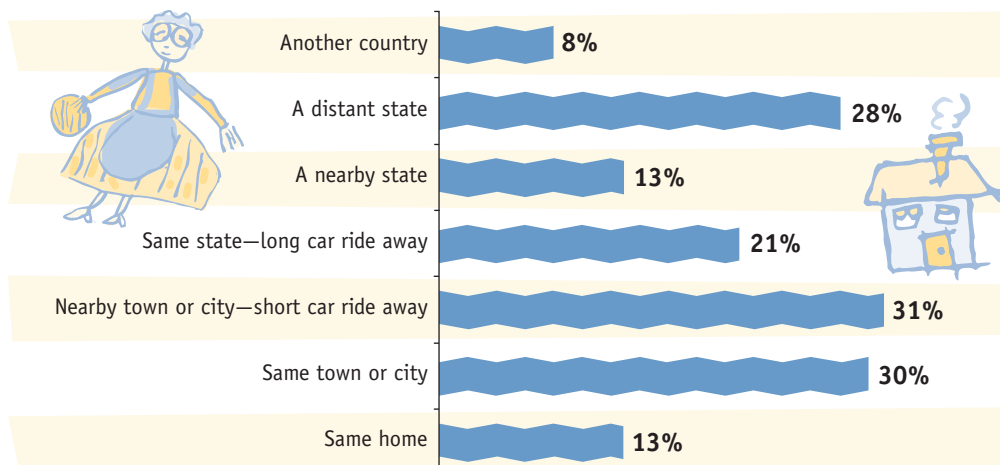
Grandparents are often stereotyped as spoiling their grandchildren during occasional visits, buying candy and giving birthday gifts. However, for many of today's youth, grandparents have taken on a much more central role in their lives. Understanding the increasing role grandparents often play in the lives of youth is becoming more important as baby boomers turn 50 at an incredible rate of one every 8.4 seconds<sup>1</sup>. According to the US Census Bureau, the elderly population is expected to increase to 54 million people by 2020 and at this rate of growth, soon there will be more grandparents than youth in the United States.

This month's issue of *Trends & Tudes* focuses on the intersection of the lives of youth and their grandparents. Harris Interactive recently completed a survey among 1,322 US teens and tweens (8- to 18-year-olds) to better understand their relationships with their grandparents.

### Youth-Grandparent Contact

A majority of youth have grandparents with whom they experience surprisingly high levels of physical visitation and other forms of communication. Most youth (91%) report having at least one living grandparent. For 11% of these young people, making a trip to grandma's house takes on a different meaning when grandma (or grandpa) is living with them. Youth are four times more likely to have a grandparent in their home than a stepbrother or stepsister (3%).

### Where do your grandparents live?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

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<sup>1</sup>Senior Publishers Media Group, 2004; [http://www.spmg.com/senior\\_demographics.html](http://www.spmg.com/senior_demographics.html)

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## Editorial: Our Take On It

**Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.**

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Youth marketing is a dynamic and exciting field. Researchers document the spending power and influence of kids, marketers clamor for their attention, and media devise new ways to reach them. Harris Interactive's Youth & Education research practice conducts more than 150 research projects a year with most of them concentrating on gathering the opinions of children and their parents.

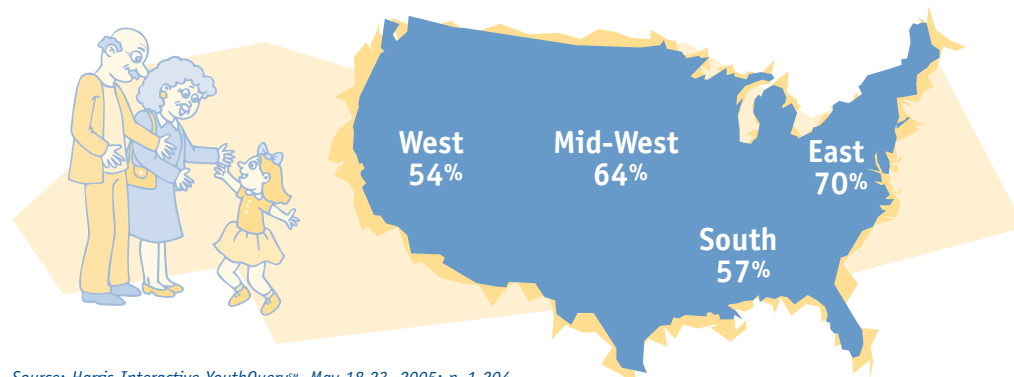
In the midst of this increased attention on youth, the influence of grandparents is rarely considered. Yet, today's grandparents have a greater influence than ever on young people.

One reason for the rising influence of grandparents relates to demographics. The average age of a first-time grandparent today is 47<sup>2</sup>. Many people become great grandparents in their 60s when their health and wealth are both strong. As the bulk of baby boomers enter and approach "grand boomer" status, they face a longer life expectancy than any previous generation. In short, there are more grandparents living than ever before.

Because of increased longevity and better health, grandparents are active, involved and resolute in relating to their grandchildren. Grand boomers have an influence over their grandchildren and great-

Grandparents of US youth span the globe with 8% of youth reporting a grandparent living in another country. However, three-quarters of grandchildren have a grandparent close by—in their home, the same or nearby town or city. The fact that at least one grandparent lives nearby could explain why it is possible that 17% of grandchildren spend time with at least one of their grandparents every day. One-quarter of the youth spend time with a grandparent at least once a week or every couple of weeks whereas only 5% never have contact with a grandparent. How often a grandchild visits a grandparent varies according to the area of the country in which the youth lives. For instance, grandchildren living in the East are 16% more likely to see their grandparent at least once a month than those grandchildren living in the West.

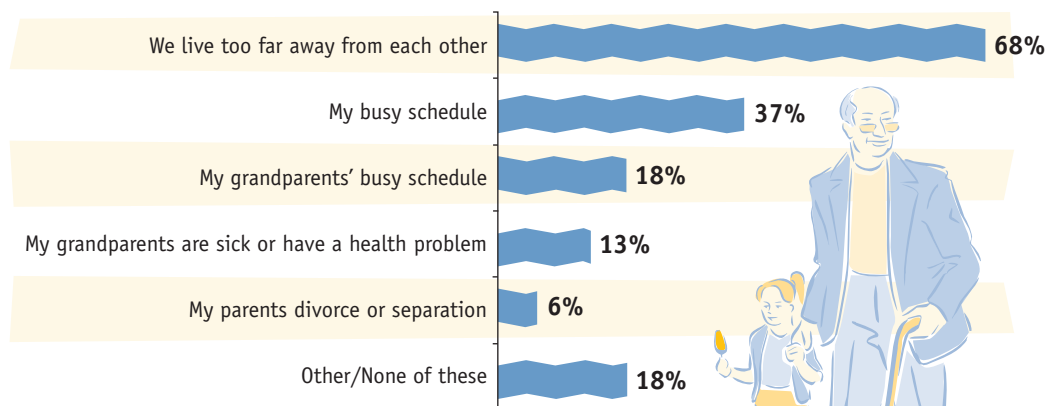
### Percentage of Grandchildren That Visit Their Grandparents at Least Once a Month



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

Even with the high rates of grandparent visitation, most grandchildren would like to spend more time with their grandparents than they do now (48%) or at least the same amount of time (47%). Almost half of grandchildren (43%) spend time planning future visits with their grandparents. Distance and busy schedules decrease the visits between grandchildren and grandparents.

### Why don't you spend as much time with your grandparent/grandparents as you would like?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

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grandchildren well into their adulthood, longer than any generation of grandparents that came before them.

Boomers have redefined their previous life stages before and we expect them to do the same for grandparenthood. Today's grandparents have fundamentally different mindsets and unprecedented spending power. Individuals over 50 have been estimated to control half of all consumer discretionary spending and to own three-quarters of all financial assets. Pleasing and providing for their grandchildren is very high on their list of priorities.

Grand boomers bring the tenets of their generation to their roles as grandparents. Fundamental to the boomer mindset is that of being forever young. Life is to be lived and experienced. Boomers have been on a lifetime quest to improve themselves both physically and emotionally. They don't expect to just live longer; they also expect to live better, so boomers are always on the search for new products and experimenting with ways to make their lives more enjoyable.

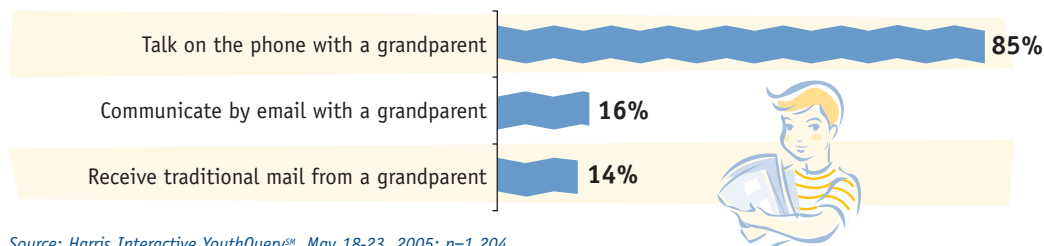
Unlike the senior generation that came before them, boomers are demanding and experienced in consumer choice. This sounds a lot like common descriptions of Generation Y, a generation accustomed to receiving attention.

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Nevertheless, the grandparent/grandchild connection is kept alive through high levels of communication.

### Once A Month, Or More Often, Grandchildren...

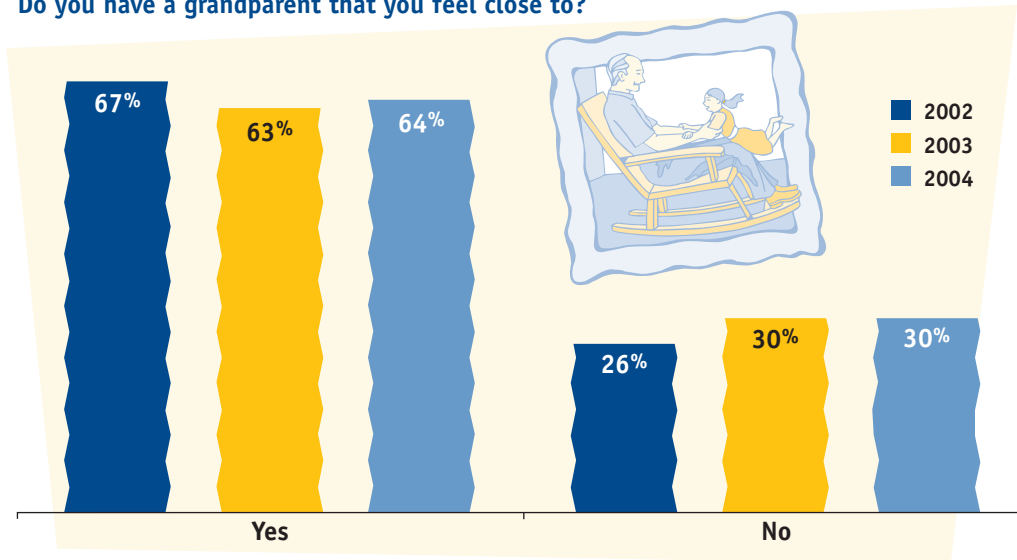


Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

### Impact of Grandparents on Grandchildren

Grandparents hold a special place in their grandchildren's lives. About one in five (20%) youth (ages 8 to 18) in the Harris Interactive YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> 2002-2004 survey describe their grandparent as a role model. Not only are grandparents often seen as role models, but a majority of grandchildren feel especially close to their grandparents. Almost half of grandchildren (47%) see the role of grandparents in their lives as very or extremely important. About one-third of the time (30%), even the 8% of tweens and teens who have grandparents in another country still see the role their grandparents play as very or extremely important.

### Do you have a grandparent that you feel close to?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup>, 2002-2004.

Grandparents can take on the role of supervisor or primary caregiver. Almost one in ten (9%) grandchildren describes their grandparent as their primary caregiver. About half (49%) of grandchildren have grandparents living in their home as primary caregivers. Although 42% of children report not being supervised by a grandparent, about one in ten youth (11%) are supervised by a grandparent daily and 30% are supervised between once a week and once every few months.

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How do boomer lifestyles and values transfer to the grandchildren in their lives?

Grandparents want to experience better lives with their grandchildren. Boomers are expected to spend \$57 billion in travel in 2005<sup>3</sup>. One-third of youth have gone on vacation with a grandparent<sup>4</sup>.

Grandparents seek out ways to experience life with their grandchildren by taking them to cultural events, out to dinner and to the movies. They shop, watch TV and even do household chores together. And, they do this with full support of parents who live hectic lives and welcome the involvement of grandparents in the lives of their children.

This desire for increased experiences with their families is also driving where grandparents choose to live. More than in previous generations who moved to retirement destinations like Florida, grand boomers are choosing to age in place because of the desire to stay near family and friends.

From a life-span development perspective, today's grandparents and current teens and tweens have much in common. As adolescents, practicing adulthood and experiencing new things, teens distance themselves from their parents, test limits and grapple with understanding abstract philosophical ideas such as religion,

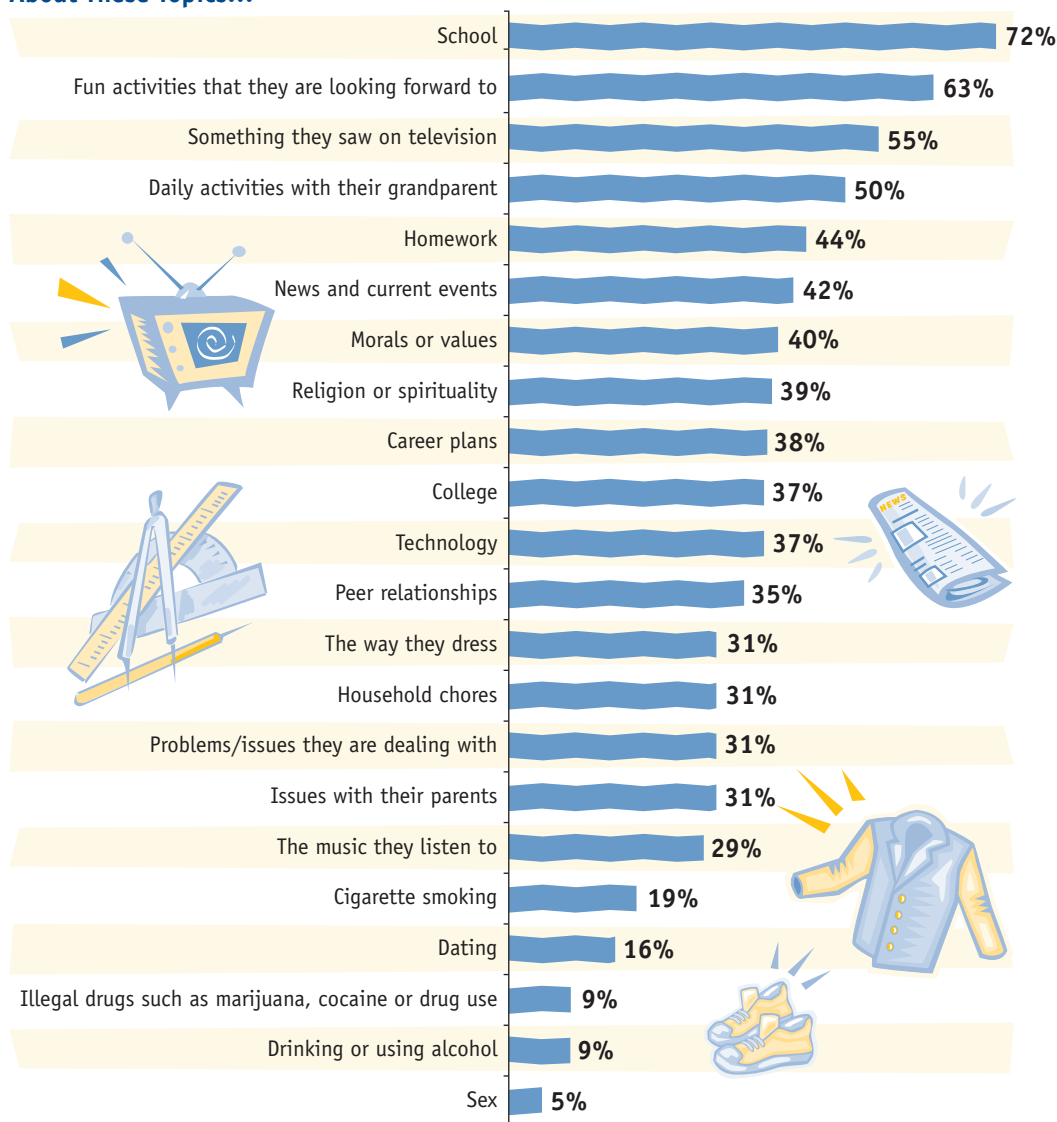
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## And They Talk...

Grandparents have a special bond with their grandchildren and provide a unique relationship in which important discussions occur. Grandchildren find it easy to have conversation with their grandparents. Most youth (53%) are extremely or very comfortable speaking to the grandparents, and only 3% expressed that they were not at all comfortable. Grandparents and grandchildren often broach difficult subjects in their conversations such as issues with parents, morals and values and even risk-related topics like smoking, drugs and sex. Grandparents listen to their grandchildren's problems (41%) and teach them about family history (41%). Humor plays into their conversations as three in five (61%) report joking around with their grandparents in the past year.

## Percentage Of Grandchildren Who Have Talked To Their Grandparents About These Topics...



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery®, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

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love, life and death. Since grandparents aren't policing youth behavior, they often provide a neutral ground for discussions during this life transition. From their perspective at the other end of the life span, grandparents often think about the continuity of their own lives and the next generation. Many reflect on their own values and morals and make adjustments. Whether providing childcare or life experiences, the emotional connections that grandparents provide can positively influence the lives of their grandchildren.

Marketers are wise to focus on the young, as young consumers represent the future market and have a disproportionate influence on other consumer groups. However, grandparents should not be an afterthought. More and more, grandparents are becoming central to every aspect of the lives of the young.

<sup>2</sup> Paul, P. (2002) *Make room for granddaddy*. [www.agewave.com/media\\_files/granddaddy.html](http://www.agewave.com/media_files/granddaddy.html)

<sup>3</sup> Thornhill, M. (2005). *The Boomer Project: Marketing to the Middle Age of Aquarius: Five "New" Priorities For Boomers Over 50*. April 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Harris Interactive YouthPulse, June 1-15, 2004; n=2,148.

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### And They Do Things Together...

#### Religion

Almost half (45%) of grandchildren attended a religious service with their grandparent in the past year. Grandparents also teach their grandchildren about values (51%) and religion and spirituality (31%).

#### School

More than two in five (43%) grandparents attend school events and more than one in five (21%) help with homework.

#### Food (with grandparent in the past year)

- 73% Ate dinner at their grandparent's home
- 67% Went out to dinner
- 41% Cooked

#### Housework (with grandparent in the past year)

- 28% Did chores around my home
- 28% Worked in a garden or indoor plants
- 25% Made repairs or improvements to their grandparent's home

#### Entertainment (with grandparent in the past year)

- 61% Watched an entertainment program on TV
- 46% Played games
- 35% Rented a movie to watch at home
- 33% Went to a movie in a movie theater
- 27% Watched a cultural or education program on TV
- 23% Went to cultural events like museums or concerts
- 20% Went to a sports event
- 19% Went to an amusement park
- 16% Went to the library
- 12% Went to see a play

### And Grandparents Give Gifts And \$\$\$...

Grandparents bestow significant amounts of money on their grandchildren. The median amount is \$100 per year with only 7% of grandchildren receiving no monetary funding. Over half of grandchildren (54%) shopped with their grandparents last year. Most interesting though are the purchases that grandparents make for their grandchildren: clothing (61%), snacks and food (59%) and books (38%). Grandparents are quite practical and are twice as likely to purchase clothing (61%) than they are toys (33%).

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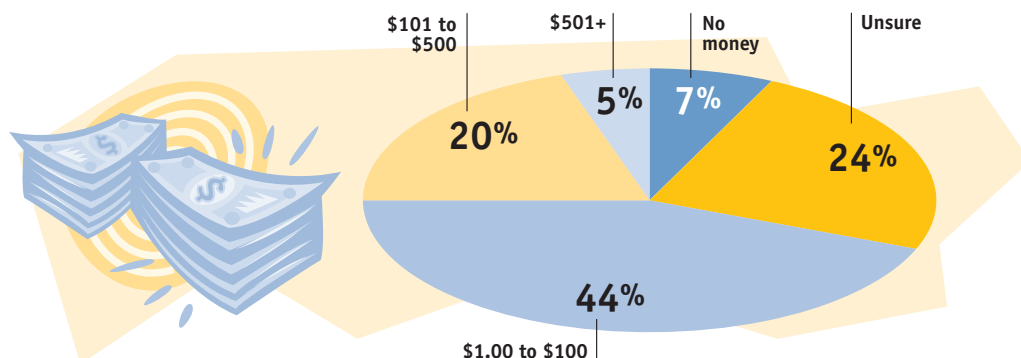
## Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_k12.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp)

## Ask a Question...

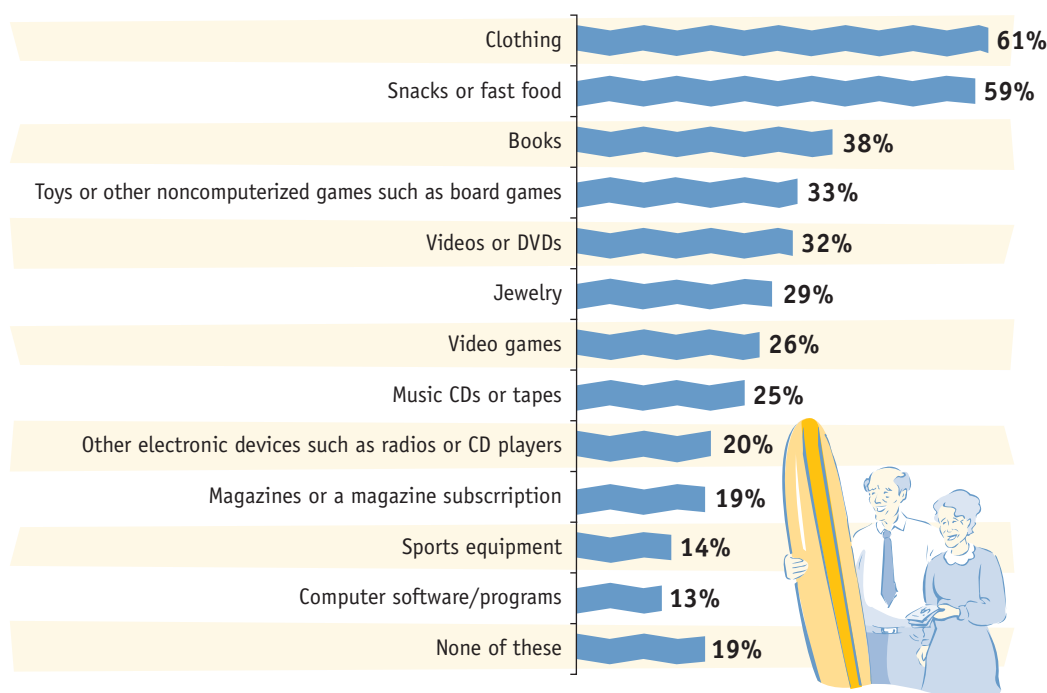
And get some answers. Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Just send us an email ([HI\\_youth\\_research@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net)) with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter. YouthQuery is your chance to ask one or a series of questions of 1,100 young consumers nationwide, and get accurate, projectable answers within days. To learn more about YouthQuery, contact us.

## Most Grandchildren Receive About \$100 From Their Grandparents Each Year



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

## What are grandparents buying for their grandchildren?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, May 18-23, 2005; n=1,204.

## Get Smart!

Did you know that Harris Interactive conducts up to five free webinars a month? Spanning a variety of business issues facing a handful of industries, these one-hour interactive sessions allow you to catch up on the latest research advancement, proprietary industry findings, and best practices. Register for one or more sessions at <http://harrisinteractive.webex.com>. Visit often as our schedule changes weekly.

## Recent Research for Public Release

### Majorities of the Public Believe Several Mental Health Conditions Are More Common Among Children and Adolescents Today than They Were 10 Years Ago

According to a recent Harris Interactive online survey of 2,102 US adults conducted for The Wall Street Journal Online's Health Industry Edition, majorities of US adults believe that mental health conditions such as depression (71%), attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (63%), anxiety disorders (63%) and eating disorders (62%) are more common among children and teens today than they were 10 years ago. Nearly half (47%) believe that learning disabilities are more common and more than one-third (36%) believe autism is more common among children and teens today.

Many adults believe that prescription drugs used to treat many of these conditions are prescribed too often, while smaller percentages think they are not prescribed often enough or are prescribed as often as they should be. And, significant numbers responded that they "don't know" about the use of prescribed drugs for these conditions, particularly for learning disabilities, eating disorders and autism.

To read the complete release, visit:

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=925>.

## It's 8 a.m.—do you know what American kids are doing?

### YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> 2005 to be released

You need to know almost as much about the youth market as you would if they were all your own children. How they spend their time, how they spend their money, their hopes, fears and aspirations and which parts of the kid experience are totally different today than they were a decade—or even a year—ago. **YouthPulse** is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2005 study is about to be released. To learn more about YouthPulse, contact us.

## Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people and issues that influence today's youth, please contact us at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com).

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